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CANDID ANIMADVERSIONS

ON

THE REV. THOMAS WHITAKER'S

FOUR LETTERS.

BY J. MAYER. *K*

"And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part".

MARK IX. 36.....40.


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CANDID ANIMADVERSIONS.



IT has generally been received as a maxim in the political and religious world, that when a polemical writer, instead of entering into the arguments of his opponent, and investigating his reasonings with candour, endeavours to confute him by railing against his character, and fixing opprobrious epithets upon his reputation, it either proves the weakness of his understanding, or the badness of his cause. Whether this be my conduct as the author of the 'Defence', or Mr. Whitaker's, who takes up his pen in vindication of Mr. Olerenshaw, let the world determine.

Mr. Whitaker is very laborious in representing his friend in the most favourable light, and I am sure I have not the least objection. On the contrary, I should heartily rejoice to hear that his labours were abundantly more useful than ever. Mr. Whitaker says, page 7, "You have picked up these slanders which have been cast upon him by such men (as infidels, gross and open sinners, and some wild and extravagant professors of religion, particularly among the Methodists) and have propagated them through the kingdom by means of your pamphlet".

And again, page 10, "You pour upon him" (Mr. Olerenshaw) "such floods of abuse as must astonish "every reader", &c. Mr. Whitaker will do well to recollect, that it would have been more to his credit as a gentleman and as a clergyman, if he had quoted the passages wherein I had done so ; but unfortunately for him, they are not to be found. If I have said one word against Mr. Olerenshaw's private character as a christian, or against his public character as a minister of the gospel, I am ready to ask his pardon ; but I am not conscious that I have done either. I had nothing to do with Mr. O. but as the author of "A Sermon on the sanctification", &c. ; and "I really thought it no breach of charity to "criticise the author, so long as I kept clear of the "person". This rule has been strictly attended to, throughout the 'Defence of the Sunday schools', &c. The only time when I have mentioned Mr. Olerenshaw separate from his work, is in the preface, where I say, 'When a charity like this is attacked 'by a gentleman of worth and piety, and a clergyman 'of the church of England', &c. Does this passage contain any reflection upon Mr. Olerenshaw's character ?

It is natural to suppose, if Mr. Whitaker's indignation was raised against my book, because he thought it slandered his friend's character, he would himself be very cautious that nothing similar should appear in his publication. He asserts, that my "attack upon Mr. O.'s character, both as a clergyman "and as a christian, is unjust and illiberal"; and that

I "have picked up the slanders" of the vilest of men, "and have propagated them through the kingdom by "means of my pamphlet": which assertions, if contrary to truth, may certainly be ranked among the worst sort of slander. But Mr. Whitaker is not content with this kind of reproach only upon my character; for, in page 11, he says, "You profess "a warm attachment to the British government, and "if you are *sincere* in your pretensions, your profession does you credit, and is a reproach to those "religionists who are otherwise minded". Why should Mr. Whitaker doubt my sincerity? Is this sly insinuation either just or generous? "But", continues he, "though you are willing to submit to "the government while you live under it; yet I "think I discover, in various parts of your work, a "kind of disposition to turn *Frenchman*". And again, page 15, "I am afraid, Sir, after all you will "turn Frenchman. I am sure your principles lead "you that way".

I will not hesitate to say, that these passages are either highly injudicious, or extremely malicious. It is a serious thing, in these days, to accuse a person of showing a disposition to become a *Frenchman*; such a character, being a subject of these kingdoms, is justly to be abhorred by every good man. If one man will charge another with this, even in sport, in the present time, he must be *highly injudicious*. I wish Mr. Whitaker's assertions may be found capable of any other interpretation, than that of wishing to raise popular indignation against me, and against

the persons engaged in these schools, by attempting to render it doubtful whether we are *sincerely* attached to the British government; and by insinuating that there is a kind of disposition among us to embrace French principles. It is not a matter of small moment for a person to be held out to the public as a favourer of French principles. But if it be considered, that this is obliquely directed against the managers of this kind of schools at large, it becomes much more serious in its consequences; for they who hold the same opinions, and follow the same practices with myself, are consequently equally involved in these implications. Nay, Mr. Whitaker has not hesitated to say, page 13, "I greatly suspect that the plan is seldom admitted, except where there is a slight mixture of *infidel characters* among the managers". And again, page 12, "There is a *"SNAKE IN THE GRASS"*"; explained, at page 21, to mean infidelity among the managers. For my own part, I am very willing that all those persons who cannot discern Mr. Whitaker's disposition, should think of me as they please: those who know my conduct, have a better rule to judge by. And it is a happy circumstance, that the managers of these schools are known to be steady friends to the British government: and by their efforts to train the rising generation in the principles of religion and virtue, they are, in the opinion of many sensible persons, doing the greatest service to the nation at large, by increasing that morality and virtue, which must ever be considered as the strength of any kingdom.

"Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people".

Mr. Whitaker (I suppose to lessen the force of my arguments) says, in page 7, "You are a young man"!! and he is pleased to call me, in page 22, "a pert young man"!! But speaking of himself, (in order, I suppose, to give weight to what he advances), he says, "I am a *few years* older than you"!!! Mr. Whitaker several times calls me a Methodist, and hauls into his book relations of what some individuals of the Methodists have said and done, at different times, as if he supposed me to be answerable for them. Neither the Methodists, nor any other sect, are so much as mentioned in the 'Defence of the Sunday Schools'. I did not consider myself as espousing the cause of any particular party. I wrote as a friend to the Sunday schools in defence of practices common to Churchmen, Methodists, and Dissenters of various denominations*. I really hope I am not ashamed of being called a Methodist; but I cannot help noticing Mr. Whitaker's reasons for

* Many schools wherein the very same things are taught, which he so severely censures, and where public worship is attended only *statedly*, are under the direction of clergymen of the first respectability, united with Dissenters of various denominations. Hence I think some of Mr. Whitaker's brethren in the church will not be much obliged to him for saying, page 13, "I greatly suspect that the plan is seldom admitted, except where there is a slight mixture of *infidel characters* among the managers"! Instances of such schools are numerous, as at Stockport, Macclesfield, Chapel-en-le-frith, &c. &c. The Manchester Sunday schools may also be in-

calling me so, because they manifest his ignorance of what constitutes a Methodist. He says, page 4, "Some of the Methodists seem not willing to own Mr. Mayer as one of their party. But I should be glad to know to whom he does belong, if not to those in whose schools he is a teacher, for whose practices he so strenuously pleads, and for whom he is so zealous, that he kindles almost into rage, when he suspects (even without any grounds) that Mr. Olerenshaw is intolerant towards them".

For my part, I really do not profess to *discern* people's *thoughts*; and therefore I cannot ascertain where Mr. W. has *discovered* that I *suspected* Mr. O. to be intolerant towards the Methodists. Neither have I at all pleaded their cause, otherwise than as they were concerned as individuals, (not as a society), along with others, in the dispute in question. But many have pleaded their cause, who were not Methodists themselves: several clergymen have, upon certain occasions, strenuously pleaded for their practices; but this did not make them Methodists.

cluded; for altho they have not thought proper to teach writing on the Sunday, yet they are equally involved in the worst part of the censure, viz., that of *teaching* in church hours. Their attendance upon public worship is perhaps less frequent than that of most Sunday schools in the neighbourhood; and the managers know very well, that to enforce their *constant* attendance upon it, would destroy the very intent of their schools, and in a great measure annihilate them. It is on this account, that the visitors and teachers in Manchester consider the attack of these clergymen to be directed against their schools, as well as against our's.

Much less am I a Methodist because I am a teacher in the Sunday school at Stockport. It was called the "Methodist Sunday school" long before it was separated from the general committee of the town. Nor can it with any propriety be termed a school belonging to the Methodists. It is supported by general subscription : it admits children, whose parents are of various denominations ; and the proportion of Methodists' children is small, compared with the whole*. And moreover, a very considerable number of the committee, visitors, and teachers, are not Methodists ; tho they are men, whose moral character will bear a strict scrutiny ; for altho they are not required to make a confession of their faith, yet they are required to maintain an unblameable character.

Mr. Whitaker seems much hurt at the title-page of my book. He says, it should not have been called 'A Defence of the Sunday schools', because Mr. O.

* Nothing could be more unjust, than attempting to pervert the school to the interests of a party. I am well persuaded, that if any teacher should use any influence he might have over the children, in order to make them join the Methodists, or any other sect, he would be very severely reprimanded by the visitors. Nay, I have good authority to say, that if ever anything of the kind should be introduced into the school, many of the managers and teachers would immediately withdraw. The teachers endeavour to acquaint the children with their duty to God and man, and to afford them every opportunity in the school, which may cherish any good desires that may appear in them ; but as to the choice of their religious profession, they are left at full liberty to judge for themselves when they come to a proper age.

professes to be a friend to the Sunday schools upon a proper plan. I must repeat it, that I had not to deal with Mr. O. as a man, or as a christian, but as the author of "A Sermon on the Use and the Abuse of "Sunday Schools". And if Mr. W. will take the pains to examine the matter thoroughly, he will find that some or other of Mr. O.'s censures bear upon every Sunday school in this neighbourhood; and therefore, I conceive there is no impropriety in calling my pamphlet 'A Defence', &c. Besides, my title-page is founded upon Mr. O.'s title-page. Mr. O. calls his "A Sermon on the use and the abuse of Sunday Schools": but those things which he is pleased to call abuses of the institution, we do not think to be so. In the answer are contained some of the reasons why we think that these are not *abuses*; and therefore we contend that there is no impropriety in defending these practices, against these charges of abuse. Neither is there any thing in this title-page, which can with truth be termed either "artful, insidious, or disingenuous". Nor has it the least "appearance of a sly attack upon one, whom I dare "not meet in an open and manly way". As to the mottos with which Mr. W. seems disposed to quarrel, I conceive they are plain enough, and I have no mystical meaning in them. I suppose I may be called upon to give an account why I called this pamphlet 'Candid Animadversions', and how the motto applies to the subject; but however, I shall leave them to Mr. W. and his friends to *discover* their meaning.

It is now several months since the 'Defence', &c., was published, and I have not heard of any error in any thing which was therein stated as fact, except the following, which I heard in a few days after its appearance. This mistake is contained in a note, page 80, in the 'Defence', respecting the local situation of Thornset school, and of Mr. Olerenshaw's chapelry. Upon more minute investigation, I find, that Marple chapel stands about 100 yards over the river, which divides Mellor from Marple; but a great part of the congregation live in Marple, whence the chapel has its name. The village of Thornset stands in Hayfield chapelry, tho a part of the hamlet is in Mellor chapelry. A small river at the foot of the village divides the two chapelries. But at the time I wrote the 'Defence', the school was removed to New-Mills, for convenience; tho at the time Mr. Olerenshaw preached his sermon, it was carried on at Thornset; and the principal part of the children come out of Mellor chapelry.

Mr. Whitaker has taken up this local mistake, and dwells much upon it, tho he very well knows that it in nowise affects the main arguments. The dispute is not respecting Mr. Olerenshaw's chapelry, nor the situation of Thornset school. However erroneous the note may be respecting these local circumstances, the main question stands unaffected thereby. I have not heard any person beside Mr. Whitaker, suppose that Mellor church will hold from a thousand to twelve hundred people: and from the best information I can gather, I have still

my doubts whether four-fifths of the inhabitants of this chapelry attend either at the church, or at the chapel, at New-Mills. These things however, I shall leave to be settled by the inhabitants themselves.

Mr. Whitaker says, "Your list of Sunday schools round the neighbourhood of Stockport, is extremely incorrect. Within the compass of my own knowledge are several numerous schools, where you have put a blank. But the managers have too much conscience to adopt your liberal plan"!!! I should have been obliged to Mr. Whitaker, if he had named those places; I have not heard of any. But Mr. W. should recollect, that I did not pretend to give an *exact* statement; it was only a sketch, from the best information I could obtain. I omitted no schools that I knew of, (and I am pretty clear no *numerous ones* have escaped me), whether upon what he calls our liberal plan or not. I can assure Mr. Whitaker, that I am not at all anxious upon what plan the schools are established, nor what is taught, provided that the grand design be to save the souls of the children, and that the teaching of other things be made subservient to this great end.

Mr. Whitaker farther says, page 20, "Under the head of a mis-statement of facts, I am necessitated to mention your frequently repeated intimation, that all the managers of Sunday schools have principally in view the salvation of the children's souls". And how does Mr. W. endeavour to invalidate the veracity of this intimation? In a way truly curious. He proceeds: "I will not call in question the asser-

tion as far as it respects the Methodists' Sunday schools in Stockport. Were I to entertain a doubt on the subject, I know what a heretic I should be accounted. And yet there is in my possession an Extract from a Memoir book, with an address to the scholars, which has been attributed to you by general report. This address might have come from the pen of a Pagan, a Mussulman, or a Jew. The grand peculiarities of the gospel are studiously concealed. The young people are neither exhorted to read the Bible, nor to attend upon public worship". Mr. Whitaker, ridiculously enough, wishes to throw the blame (if any blame attaches) of this address upon me, tho it is sanctioned and published by a committee, of which I am not even a member.

The little book here alluded to, contains an account of the happy deaths of two of the teachers, and of several of the scholars. An account is therein given of their conversion and experience. They rejoiced at the prospect of death, knowing that they had "*a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*". Their mourning was turned into joy, for they could experimentally say, "*Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me*". They exulted in the full assurance of the favour and pardoning love of God, and died triumphing in the confidence of being "*for ever with the Lord*"! Are these what Mr. Whitaker would call the "grand peculiarities of the gospel"? The children are exhorted

in the most affectionate manner by the committee, to be followers of those their companions who are now entered upon their reward. The committee having warned the children against sundry vices, and directed them to the practice of various duties, tell them, that it was the consciousness of the favour of God which softened the dying pillows of their companions, and afforded them a bright prospect into eternity. The address thus concludes: "Above all, when you read this little book, pray that God may seal instruction upon your hearts: pray to him with all your childlike simplicity, that he would make you like these of whom you read, *fit to live, and fit to die*. They were a little while ago your companions; they are now in heaven. God only knows, how soon you may be laid upon a death-bed, with your weeping friends around, taking a last farewell of you. Would you not wish to have, at that solemn season, a *comfortable assurance* that you are going to join your companions, who are gone before? If God should spare you many years, always remember, VIRTUE ALONE BRINGS HAPPINESS,—THE BLESSING OF GOD PROSPERITY:—HIS PROVIDENCE IS YOUR ONLY SAFEGUARD; AND HIS LOVE, YOUR TITLE TO ETERNAL GLORY". Whether the committee have studiously avoided the grand peculiarities of the gospel, in this address, let the candid judge. As to their reading the Bible, such of the children as are able, are in the habit of reading it in the school, and we believe many of them in their own houses to their

parents also. And they are likewise under the necessity of attending public worship regularly, with their teachers, and must do so as long as they remain scholars: and this address was not written to those who had left the school.

But hear Mr. Whitaker once more on this head: "Was the principal design of the Thornset school to save the souls of the children? From the printed report of it, dated Jan. 1, 1797, one would not imagine that children have any souls, or that there is either a God or a future state. But it was likely to be so, when a man was at the head of the teachers, who at the time avowedly rejected the Divine Authority of the Bible". Is it expected that the annual report of a school should contain the particulars of what is taught therein? or is it expected to contain, as the title implies, the state of the charity? But, "a man at the head of the teachers avowedly rejected the Divine Authority of the Bible". And will one solitary instance out of such a number, prove that the managers of Sunday schools at large have not principally in view the salvation of the children's souls*? Suppose I could find

* Nothing can be more injurious than the endeavouring to throw an odium upon bodies of men engaged in any public offices, (but especially those engaged in religious charities), on account of the failing characters of individuals. It is very improbable that any society, if numerous, should be without such characters: but the body are not answerable for these, except they wink at their crimes. But however, I am glad that the instance Mr. Whitaker has selected, is as contrary to

an individual clergyman whose life is immoral—would Mr. Whitaker think it ingenuous to be told, that the clergy, in preaching the gospel, have not in view the salvation of the souls of mankind? I will however, mention a practice which we have in the Sunday school at Stockport, and most other “modern Sunday schools” have something similar, viz. Once every quarter, the committee, visitors and teachers, meet together, and among other things, this examination is entered into: “Are there any complaints against the moral characters of any of the teachers”? If any immorality should be proved against a teacher, that person would be discharged. I have dwelt long upon this subject, in order to expose the sophistry which Mr. Whitaker has used, to lessen the *religious credit* of the managers of these Sunday schools. And I appeal to the candid, for their judgement upon that person, who can use such methods in order to prejudice the public against a charitable institution.

If Mr. Whitaker will refer to page 49 of the ‘Defence’, &c., he will there find these words: ‘There is nothing in this passage’, (from Mr. Olerenshaw’s sermon), ‘which requires very particular attention. I have inserted the whole of it, that you might not have any reason to say I was uncandid with you, in quoting your discourse unfairly. I

truth, as it is to candour. See the letter from the committee of the New-Mill (late Thornset) Sunday school, at the end of this pamphlet.

‘have taken the substance of what you say upon the ‘Sunday schools, from beginning to end’. After such a declaration and conduct, it might have been expected, that any person undertaking to write an answer to the ‘Defence’, would at least have quoted it fairly, and would have given the sentences as they stand in connexion. But Mr. Whitaker, the professed friend of Mr. Olerenshaw, takes up his pen; and in order to make me appear to as much disadvantage as possible, and to prejudice the public against the cause I have espoused, quote parts of sentences, leaves out their connexion, alters their position; nay, affirms that I have said what I have not said. For such illiberal treatment, I cannot conceive what apology Mr. Whitaker can make, except it be, that “I am a young man, and that he is a *few* years older than I am”!!!

There is not the least occasion to enter again into the merits of the dispute, since Mr. Whitaker has not deigned to examine them at all. But as I wish all the candid to judge for themselves, I shall take the trouble of going through what he may call his quotations from the ‘Defence’, and show how far they are erroneous. Mr. Whitaker begins his 2nd letter thus: “Your book is either so void of method, or “the method you have chosen is so contrary to my “ideas of propriety, that I must be content to gather “up the threads of your discourse from different parts “of it. You are so excessively angry with Mr. O. “that almost every page is crowded with hard speeches

“uttered against him. He is—ignorant—superstitious—bigotted—dealing out anathemas not only against individuals, but against whole bodies of men whose religious character had been till then unimpeached. He is artful and disguised—an enemy to the Sunday schools—discouraging the spreading of evangelical truth—nay exerting himself to prevent this—maintaining the principle, that ignorance is the mother of devotion—a bitter slanderer—an enemy to the public weal—one who preaches for hire, and if he had not a benefice would not preach.—But I stop ; for it would be tedious to collect all your flowers of rhetoric varied, diversified, and intermixed through the greatest part of ninety-eight pages”. Let it be observed, that the above is given to the world as an exact quotation from me, —as my own words. It appears indeed, as it here stands, a very strange collection of coarse epithets and foul names. But let us now examine them more minutely.

“He is ignorant—superstitious—bigotted”. I have no where said that Mr. Olerenshaw is either ignorant, superstitious, or bigotted.

“Dealing out anathemas not only against individuals, but against whole bodies of men whose religious character had been till then unimpeached”. Mr. Olerenshaw says, that Sabbath-breakers are among the worst of sinners ; and that those who are employed in what he calls the “modern Sunday schools”, are employed in profaning the Sabbath. If this be not a denunciation of an anathema, and a

terrible one, against individuals, and whole bodies of men, then what is?

"He is artful and disguised". I have no where said this. In the preface is this passage: 'When a charity like this, is attacked by a gentleman of worth and piety, and a clergyman of the church of England, under the pretence of abuses in the institution, the onset claims the benevolence, the best abilities, and all that is good or sacred amongst mankind, to withstand the fatal effects of error so artfully disguised'.

"An enemy to the Sunday schools". I shall thank Mr. Whitaker for the page which contains this expression.

"Discouraging the spreading of evangelical truth". Mr. Whitaker should have added, 'in this way', which would materially alter the sense. I have said, page 81, in the 'Defence', &c., 'Mr. Olerenshaw appears to have an objection against this; for even in this Sermon, we find him endeavouring to discourage, as much as he durst, the spreading of evangelical truth in this way'; that is, 'in the way of holding prayer-meetings on Sunday evenings'.

"Nay, exerting himself to prevent this". Where have I said so? The passage which comes nearest to it is in page 45 of the 'Defence', where it is said, 'I believe, Sir, notwithstanding your exertions to prevent it, knowledge will increase'.

"Maintaining the principle, that ignorance is the mother of devotion". In page 27 of the

‘Defence’, is this passage: ‘If we strictly trace your observations to their first principle, it will appear evidently, that they all originate in the old maxim, Ignorance is the mother of Devotion. For, if it be unlawful and improper to teach arithmetic on the Sunday, because it is a human science, it is unlawful and improper to teach writing; and if it be unlawful and improper to teach writing and accounts, it is also unlawful and improper to teach reading, on the Sunday. No one of these is more a human art than the other; and none of them are, in the strict sense, essentially necessary to salvation: but all of them are necessary to the knowledge of the scriptures’. Again, at page 43, is the following passage: ‘The clergy, of France, acted upon this wretched maxim, (which, one would think from your Sermon, you wished to establish again in England), that Ignorance is the mother of Devotion. They kept the people as much as possible in darkness’. If these passages be erroneous, let Mr. Whitaker prove them so by fair argument, and not by raillery.

“*A bitter slanderer*”. I have no where said so. Mr. Olerenshaw asserts, in his Sermon, that “those Sunday schools are direct violations of the law of the Sabbath, (1) Where any kind of learning is taught during the season of public worship, and made to serve instead of it. And, (2) where any instructions are given, on any part of the day, which relate only to this world, and not immediately to the soul”. And then he draws this

conclusion: "In all such cases, both the teachers
 "and the taught, are employed in profaning the
 "Lord's day, instead of keeping it holy, and im-
 "proving it for the soul's spiritual advantage".
 From page 16 to page 30 in the 'Defence', &c.,
 some reasons are offered, why I think these two
 propositions will not hold good; and conclude by
 saying, page 30, 'I hope it will appear to every
 'candid person, that your two grand propositions
 'must fall to the ground, except you can support
 'them better than you have done, and in some way,
 'which I confess I do not foresee. And if your
 'premises be false, what must we say of your con-
 'clusion, but that it is a *bitter slander* upon the
 'characters of men, who are laying themselves out
 'to do good to their fellow-creatures, without any
 'other reward than that which flows from the appro-
 'bation of their own consciences, and who on this
 'account had a right to expect softer language from a
 'minister of the gospel'. If Mr. Whitaker had
 wished to prove himself the real friend of Mr.
 Olerenshaw, he should have repelled this charge, by
 substantiating these premises upon the refutation of
 the arguments brought against them; and then the
 conclusion would no longer have been a slander.
 These are the points in dispute; and it would have
 shown Mr. Whitaker to have been a lover of the
 truth, if he had candidly investigated these argu-
 ments.

"*An enemy to the public weal*". In page 73 of
 the 'Defence', is this passage: 'All public charities

‘are instituted for the public good; and therefore every attack upon these, is in fact an injury to the community. But such charities as are carried on by persons who take no gratuity for their labour, are more especially sacred; because these can have no end to serve, but the public good. Every person therefore, who openly attacks these charities, must be considered an enemy to the public weal’.

“*One who preaches for hire*”. In page 37 of the ‘Defence’, I have said, ‘But give me leave to mention another secular employment which you yourself practise, which is, receiving a salary for preaching the gospel on a Sunday’.

“*And if he had not a benefice would not preach*”. In a note, page 75 of the ‘Defence’, are these words: ‘To say that a benefice is appointed for the purpose of giving the resident leisure on the week-days, to study, and devote himself to the work of the ministry, proves only this, that without the benefice there would be no minister, and without the preaching there would be no benefice, which amounts to the same thing’. This applies generally. What Mr. Olerenshaw as an individual would do, if he were put to the trial, I cannot pretend to say; but I think it would be very unreasonable that he, or any other clergyman, should preach without a salary. “*The labourer is certainly worthy of his reward*”. These passages were introduced to show that Mr. Olerenshaw’s practices opposed his principles; and that he could not with propriety condemn us upon the ground of following a secular

employment on the Sunday, without his own censures bearing upon himself.

But these are not the only passages wherein Mr. Whitaker has misrepresented what I have said. His third letter begins thus: "I am not unacquainted with the controversy which arose soon after the Reformation in England, respecting the morality of the fourth Commandment. It was a controversy which originated in the peculiar circumstances of the times, and those men who, with so much zeal, endeavoured to decry the religious observance of the Lord's day, certainly did themselves no credit. I am sorry to see you, Sir, a professed Methodist, engaging so warmly on the same side of the question; though it is a little remarkable that your ideas of the sabbath are even more lax and more undigested than those of your predecessors. They maintained that the Sunday ought to be observed, because it was enjoined to be kept holy by the authority of the Church. As far as I can collect your views on the same head, they amount to this—It is *expedient* to devote one day in seven to the concerns of religion". Here Mr. Whitaker says, (if there be any meaning in this paragraph), that I am engaging warmly on the side of the question against the morality of the fourth commandment. But nothing can be more false. I have not said one word against the morality of this command. So far from it, I have in as direct terms as possible asserted my belief in its morality, in page 56 of the 'Defence': 'Let none suppose, that I consider the moral law as

‘abrogated ; by no means. The ceremonial law was ‘finished, by the coming of our Lord, and the *moral* ‘law was thereby fulfilled’. See the whole passage.

Again : “ As far as I can collect your views on ‘the same head, they amount to this—It is *expedient* “to devote one day in seven to the concerns of religion”. Mr. Whitaker has here made a wonderful collection of my views. I will venture to tell him, he must have collected them out of his own imagination, and not out of my book. I have said, page 6, in the ‘Defence’, ‘There are *three* grounds, ‘on which, I think, we may successfully place the ‘strict and religious observance of the Lord’s Day :

- ‘1. Apostolical custom.
- ‘2. The reasonableness of the thing itself.
- ‘3. The laws of our land’.

After enlarging considerably on each of these points, and endeavouring to show how these are obligatory upon us, I conclude by saying, page 9, ‘Having ‘made these few observations, I hope you cannot ‘justly accuse me of wishing to lessen our obligations ‘to keep the Sabbath, or in any way to promote what ‘may be properly deemed a breach of it’. Upon the supposition of my resting the observance of the Sabbath on the ground of *expediency only*, Mr. Whitaker informs us, that he has made a *discovery* of “a kind of disposition in me to turn *Frenchman*”! And he seems to sport himself a good deal with the idea of his sagacity ; but this sort of wit is rather too low for the seriousness of his subject.

Mr. Whitaker, in the same page, says, "Thus you can set aside without scruple one of the grand peculiarities of Christianity, and make the commandment of God of none effect, in order to maintain your argument in favour of teaching writing and arithmetic on a Sunday". God forbid that we should make the command of God of none effect! We contend that we do not, and Mr. Whitaker has not proved the contrary. How he could think that we set aside one of the "*grand peculiarities* of Christianity", I cannot tell; for, in the next page but one, he says, that Adam, and the Patriarchal Church of God, *kept the Sabbath*, as well as the Jews. But this is not the *only inconsistency* in his pamphlet.

Mr. Whitaker then mentions, pages 12 and 13, several individuals, and some collective bodies of men, who, he says, strictly believe in the morality of this precept; and then he draws this conclusion: "Such are men's views of the morality of this commandment, that in our nation you stand vastly in the minority". Mr. Whitaker should consider, that through the whole of this passage he is only beating the air. Neither I, nor any of the friends of the "modern Sunday schools", have said anything against this command. I will venture to say, that the managers of these schools pay as great a regard to the sanctity of the *Christian Sabbath* as he does: but they really do not think it a violation of the day, to collect together poor children—who would otherwise be found in the fields and lanes, &c., in all manner of mischief—and to teach them things which

tend to improve their minds, and to save their souls.

But he proceeds, page 13, "You tell Mr. O. that he ought to bring all his proofs on the subject" (i. e. on the subject of our teaching being a violation of the law of the Christian Sabbath) "from the New Testament. But he really believes that both the Old and New Testaments *are given by inspiration of God*, and that both *are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness*". And have I denied this? But what sophistry is here! Does Mr. Olerenshaw, or Mr. Whitaker, believe that all the ceremonial law, &c., is binding upon christians, because *it was given by inspiration of God*? I will refer them to a passage, which they must allow was given not only by *inspiration*, but by express command from God—Leviticus xxv. 1 to 13. This command was given by the Almighty from the same place, to the same people, in the same circumstances as that, "*Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy*", &c.; and consequently according to *this reasoning* of these divines, they ought to insist upon this Sabbath of Years being kept, as well as the Weekly Sabbath. It is obvious we must take some other method of proving its obligation, in the Christian dispensation, than that of saying, "*it is given by inspiration of God*". He says, page 11, "You urge nothing in opposition to it, (i. e. to the keeping of a French Decade, or one day in ten, instead of the Sabbath), "except "Apostolic custom, and on that topic, any person

“would naturally reason after this manner: *Why “did the Apostles keep one day in seven? Doubtless “because they were Jews”,* (we have generally supposed the apostles were Christians, i. e. disciples or followers of Christ), *“and had been accustomed to “the observance of the Jewish Sabbath. Had they “lived in modern times, they would most probably “have complied with the common order”!!!* If Mr. Whitaker has not done more in these few sentences towards lessening this command in the esteem of the public, and weakening our obligations to keep it, than all I have said, then I must own that I do not understand the force of language. I would earnestly recommend to Mr. Whitaker, before he takes up his pen again, seriously to consider upon what ground he will now set his foot, since he can so easily dispense with that of apostolical custom, to prove the obligation of this command under the Christian dispensation. And likewise, if he should take up the subject again, let him define to us, the ends and purposes of the Christian Sabbath, and show, by arguments deduced from reason and scripture, how and wherein the practices we plead for, are contrary to the spirit and law of the Christian institution.

Again; Mr. Whitaker, after having introduced a custom of the Cheshire farmers “getting in their “hay and corn on a Sunday”, and their wicked neighbours helping them *gratis*, says, “I consider “your teaching writing and accounts on a Sunday just “in the same light, and when you plead for the law-fulness of it, because you do it *gratis*, you might

“just as well plead for the lawfulness of working at a
 “Cotton Factory *gratis*”. I have nowhere pleaded
 for the *lawfulness* of it, upon any such principle.
 I have pleaded, that we cannot justly be accused of
 following a secular employment while we teach *gratis*,
 in the following passage, page 35, in the ‘Defence’,
 ‘These children are taught by men, who receive no
 ‘pay for their labour. Hence the children may
 ‘reason,—our master has so much veneration for the
 ‘Lord’s day, that tho he takes these pains with us,
 ‘he does it from a principle of benevolence, and not
 ‘for the sake of secular gain. Here then the scholars
 ‘can have no plea for following a secular employment
 ‘on the Sunday, from the example of their teacher’.
 It may be necessary to remark here, that Mr. Whitaker
 has set out, and proceeded through his pamphlet, upon
 this false principle, that we were following a secular
 employment on the Sunday. In his first Letter,
 page 4, he says, “Before I proceed to the more imme-
 “diate object of these letters, it may not be unnecessary
 “to state the ground upon which my friend and his op-
 “ponent stand.—Mr. O. a clergyman of the Church
 “of England, a church in the estimation of some of your
 “party, nearly the most corrupt of any in the world,
 “is urging the necessity of a strict and religious
 “observance of the Lord’s day. And you, a leading
 “person among the Methodists, a body of people who
 “have long affected to be the most exact and religious
 “of any in the kingdom, stand on the opposite side,
 “pleading for the liberty of employing those sacred
 “hours in mere secular business. You must allow,

"Sir, that this is a fair statement of the case, and I will leave it to the unprejudiced part of mankind to make the proper inference".

Indeed, I shall never allow this to be "a fair statement of the case"; for, besides several very uncandid representations, there is one palpable falsity in it. Pray, who does Mr. Whitaker mean by "your party"? If he be speaking to his subject at all, he must mean those who stand on the same side respecting the question in dispute: if so, then several clergymen are in our party, and this party who have the management of these schools are steady friends to the government, and in general to the establishment. Farther, Mr. Olerenshaw is urging such "a strict and religious observance of the Lord's day", as forbids our doing what we think, and what Mr. Whitaker has not disproved, to be works of mercy, in the highest sense. Mr. O. is not urging a strict and religious observance of the Lord's day, in opposition to licentiousness and profanity.

Let us now view it on the other side. Mr. Whitaker says, that the Methodists are "a body of people who have long *affected* to be the most exact and religious of any in the kingdom". Why does Mr. Whitaker say, they have only *affected* to be so? Can he disprove that they have been so? I repeat it, that the Methodists as a body have no concern in this dispute, and therefore I am not called upon to take up their cause; but I really think this is a very ungenerous, unchristian-like hint against them. But to crown the whole, Mr. Whitaker states, that I am

"on the opposite side", (i.e. against the strict and religious observance of the Lord's day), "pleading for the liberty of employing those sacred hours in *"mere secular business"*". This is as false a statement as could possibly be made: I have never pleaded for any such liberty; and I defy Mr. Whitaker to prove it from anything I have said. So far from pleading for the "liberty of employing those sacred hours in mere secular business", I have in the passage quoted above, and in several others, maintained the direct contrary. If indeed giving our labour, and giving our money, to support an institution, calculated to rescue the rising generation from ignorance and vice, be *secular business*, then I do not understand the term*. I will now appeal to the public, whether Mr. Whitaker's be "a fair state-

* According to the best definition of the word "*secular*", it means *something that relates only to this present world*; and when conjoined with "*business*", it must mean a trade by which a living is acquired; or in other words, a business by which we obtain secular, or worldly gain, or profit. But is anything like this practised in our schools? Nay, do any of the things which we teach, relate to the *body merely*, or to *this world only*? Very far from it. Whatever we teach, is to improve the mind, and to promote the salvation of the soul. We grant, that we teach human arts or sciences, and instruct by means of them; for we cannot tell how to convey instruction through any other medium. Does not Mr. Whitaker, and every other preacher, instruct from the pulpit by means of human science? We conceive, the heart of man is affected through the medium of his understanding, and the human understanding is instructed, in general, by perceiving things as they are represented to it through the medium of some human art or science.

"ment of the case"; and "I will leave it to the un-
 "prejudiced part of mankind to make the proper
 "inference".

Again; Mr. Whitaker says, page 15, "You
 "would teach any thing on a Sunday which tends to
 "expand the minds of youth. Now, Sir, the
 "teaching of *Ovid*, and *Virgil*, and *Horace*, and
 "*Homer*, has this tendency", &c. Had Mr. W.
 been candid enough to have quoted the whole of the
 sentence, he could not have made this use of it.
 The passage is this, page 26 in the 'Defence'.
 'Any thing which will expand the minds of the
 'children, and lead them to love and adore their
 'Creator, or make them more capable of promoting
 'his cause in the world, is directly within the pur-
 'pose of this institution'. If Mr. W. can prove,
 that the reading of *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, &c. &c.,
 will, at the same time that it expands the minds of
 youth, lead them to love and adore their Creator,
 then he may, in my humble opinion, lawfully teach
 it on the Sunday.

But farther; Mr. Whitaker says, page 16,
 "Your ideas of public worship are founded on your
 "mistaken views of the Sabbath. You would have
 "young people frequent the house of God—*when it*
 "*is convenient*". I have said, page 17 in the 'Defence',
 'It is the duty of every person to attend public
 'worship as often as he can; but there is no text that
 'forbids our *doing good* on any part of the Sunday'.
 The public will discern a considerable difference be-
 twixt the phrase, 'as often as he can', as it stands in

this sentence, and Mr. Whitaker's, "*when it is convenient*"! After all that has been said upon our neglect of public worship, if Mr. Whitaker will examine a little more attentively a note at page 68, in the 'Defence', respecting the management of the Stockport school, he will there find that the teachers and children whom he so much accuses, attend public worship six times in four Sundays. Perhaps Mr. Whitaker would think his parishoners tolerable good churchmen, if they would all attend six times out of eight. Besides, these children have frequently lectures in the school; they constantly read the Bible in the school; and have prayers in it four times in the day. It is true, the smaller children do not attend public worship so often; they cannot all be accommodated: but this deficiency is supplied by the religious instruction they receive in the school, in a way much better adapted to their understandings and capacities.

I shall mention one other false representation, and then leave this part of the subject. Mr. Whitaker says, page 22, "When a pert young man takes upon him to charge a clergyman, of twice his years, with 'ignorance of Ecclesiastical history', &c. I have never charged Mr. Olerenshaw with ignorance of Ecclesiastical history. The only time when I mention it, is in the following passage, page 24 of the 'Defence': 'You cannot be so ignorant of Ecclesiastical history, as not to know, that the council of Laodicea made an express declaration against this error', i.e. the error of observing the Christian

Sunday as a Jewish Sabbath. So far from charging Mr. O. with being ignorant of Ecclesiastical history, I did not suppose it possible ; such an idea never entered my mind.

Let the reader now judge from this sketch of his quotations, of the candour of Mr. Whitaker towards me. Is it possible that any work would bear to have its sentences mangled, brought out of their connexion, or given in parts, and the sense remain complete ? The sacred scriptures themselves would not bear such treatment. There is no guarding against such a malevolent attack ; tho its force generally returns upon its author. This is not a case, where the writer might have been misinformed, and thereby led into errors : Mr. Whitaker had, or ought to have had, the ' Defence', before him, when he wrote his " Letters" ; and when he had made a quotation, he ought to have examined it minutely, to see that he had copied it verbatim. Persons are not at liberty, when writing controversy, to put their own construction upon sentences, and then give their own comment to the world as the words of their opponents. Much less are they at liberty to break the sentences into pieces, and give them a meaning which in their connexion they will not bear. I wish to make every reasonable allowance for the resentment which the Rev. Mr. Whitaker might feel, at the supposed injury done to his friend's character, as well as for the warmth which a man feels in opposing opinions contrary to his own ; but I fear, after all, that many of the passages here noticed cannot be ranked

under any other head, than that of *wilful misrepresentations*.

I must take notice of a few other passages in Mr. Whitaker's work, and then I shall take my leave of him. In page 16, he says, "You actually maintain that they are more likely to be converted by attending a Sunday School, during the hours of worship, than by attending God's own appointed means of grace. Is not this to make yourself wiser than God? Why did not our Lord's commission to his apostles run in these terms, Go ye into all the world and erect Sunday Schools for every creature"? I maintained, that 'any person who will be at the pains to make himself acquainted with the things taught in these schools, will find them more likely to be the means of conversion to poor, ignorant children, than even attending public worship itself'. And, I confess, I am still of the same opinion. Mr. W.'s question, "Is not this to make yourself wiser than God"? has no force till he can prove, that attending public worship is God's *only appointed* means of grace. The latter part of the passage, I really think, is a sort of jesting with the sacred scriptures, which would have been full as well omitted, especially by a clergyman. Our Lord's instruction is plain enough, and contains the duty of the apostles; but he does not say, that the *apostles only* were to use means for the bringing of sinners to God. Mr. Whitaker seems to have lost sight of such chapters as 12th chap. Romans, and 12th chap. 1 Corinthians,

Again ; Mr. Whitaker says, page 15, " You say
 " the scriptures cannot be understood without the
 " knowledge of Arithmetic, and I will add of more
 " vulgar arts. Who can understand the construction
 " and workmanship of Solomon's temple, without
 " being a stone mason ? Who can understand the
 " workmanship of Noah's ark, without being a car-
 " penter" ? &c. I am neither a stone-mason, nor
 a carpenter, and yet I really think I can understand
 the construction of these, tho I may not be able to
 frame together such pieces of workmanship : but I
 should be at a greater loss to comprehend their mag-
 nitude, if I had no knowledge of arithmetic. Many
 of the calculations in the prophecies I could not pos-
 sibly understand without the knowledge of it : and
 to understand these, especially in these latter days,
 is of far greater consequence to us, than to understand
 the particular construction of Noah's ark, &c. &c.

Mr. Whitaker says, page 21, " It is next to im-
 " possible that such pupils as yours, should ever
 " consider that as a crime in a *Counting-house* which
 " they have been taught to esteem and practise as a
 " duty and privilege in a school". This is the only
 reason which has been urged in this dispute, against
 the *lawfulness* of teaching writing and arithmetic on
 the Sunday. But our teaching these things, has not
 the least tendency to produce the evil mentioned.
 Mr. Whitaker might as well say, that by teaching to
 read, and speak with propriety, we are directly train-
 ing up children to become stage-players. He would

have as much truth in the one as the other ; and the latter would be fully as probable as the former. Is it not strange, that any persons of common information can persist in railing against a practice as *unlawful*, merely because it may be applied to a bad purpose ? One would think sensible men would be ashamed of such an argument. Can any thing be more absurd than to say that a thing is bad, because it may be abused ? Can Mr. Whitaker mention one good thing which has been given to man by his bountiful Creator, which has not been abused ? But, does that good thing therefore become bad ? According to this way of reasoning, we might say a man should not eat, because by eating, some men make themselves gluttons. On the same plan, we should not make use of any kind of liquor, because we see many people drink to excess. It is just as absurd to object against our practices in the schools, because a bad use may be made of them, as it would be to refuse to teach children to speak, alleging that it would be next to impossible that they should avoid swearing, lying, obscene conversation, &c. &c. These are only different modifications of the same powers of speech and language. I have before said, that the same reasons will hold equally good against teaching to read as against teaching writing, &c. ; and I will venture to tell Mr. Whitaker, that he can bring no arguments against the *lawfulness* of our teaching writing and arithmetic on the Sunday, which will not equally militate against the *lawfulness* of our

teaching reading on a Sunday*. Let Mr. Whitaker seriously consider this point, and if he comes forward again, let him bring forth his *strong arguments*, remembering that railing is not reasoning, nor are witticisms arguments.

Mr. Whitaker, in page 23, exhorts me "to bring all under my authority, not to engage in Writing, Arithmetic, Hiring out books, or Book-keeping on GOD'S HOLY DAY". Book-keeping is a practice we have nothing to do with. In the 'Defence', I have sufficiently stated in what way, and for what ends, we teach arithmetic. As to "Hiring out books", I cannot conceive from whence he has gathered such an idea. We have a library, it is true, consisting of many hundred volumes, and from thence we supply

* Some persons who are more consistent, maintain that it is a breach of the fourth commandment to teach reading, as much as to teach any thing else, because this is a human science; and therefore they, conceiving it to be unlawful to teach at all on the Sunday, any human art or science, condemn the institution of Sunday schools in toto. A neighbouring clergyman, aware of this difficulty, asserts in a late publication, that "the intention of these institutions is not that they should be taught to read *as a science*, but only with a view to religious improvement"†. I confess it requires a much greater degree of penetration than I am possessed of, to understand how they can teach reading otherwise than "*as a science*". If the knowledge of reading be an art or science, then how can it be taught *not as a science*? We take a child, and begin by teaching it letters one by one; then by joining them together, to make out words; and then to put words together, so as to read sentences with propriety. Can this be any thing else than teaching the knowledge of the art, or science of reading? Where is the use of attempting to stand upon a ground which is not tenable?

† See a Sermon in defence of Sunday schools, by C. P. Myddleton, A. M.

upwards of 200 of the children with books to read in the week-days ; but we do not *hire* them out. Nay, these books have not even been purchased from the funds of the school, but were given to the library by individuals. In these two instances, it is probable Mr. Whitaker may have been misinformed by persons not sufficiently acquainted with the internal management of the school. I only mention them here, to rectify the mistake with the public.

In page 22, he says, "As to your famous puzzle "at p. 29, if a school-boy, who has read any treatise "of logic should find himself unable to detect the "fallacy of your reasoning, I really think he must "have a *most uncommon scull*". Perhaps I shall not merit the epithet of "a pert young man", if I humbly request Mr. Whitaker to condescend to explain this "puzzle", (as he pleases to call it), for the benefit of us, who are unfortunately possessed of such "*most uncommon sculls*" !

Again, in the same page, he says, "I think it "necessary, however, to conclude with assuring "you, that I have by no means exhausted my subject, "and that should you proceed with the contro- "versy, I shall undoubtedly write again, if the "Lord permit". What has been the "subject" of Mr. Whitaker's Letters I hope the public will now be able to discern. He has dwelt upon some trivial circumstances, and quarrelled with some few expressions, but the main points remain as they did. I would just remind Mr. Whitaker, that the "Lord permits" many evil, as well as many

good things, and that the morality of the third commandment is as great as that of the fourth. Whether it may tend to promote the cause of God in the world to write again in the same manner, I will not pretend to determine ; but I will assure Mr. Whitaker if he does, I shall not take any notice of *such* a work. However, if any person chooses to come forward as a *gentleman*, and as a *christian*, to investigate the subject by fair argument, he will meet with a candid attention on our part.

Mr. Whitaker concludes his publication by saying, "And now, Sir, I cannot but persuade myself
 "that you have a desire to benefit the rising genera-
 "tion ; and that a review of your conduct to which
 "you have been prompted, and of the principles
 "which you have hastily embraced, will lead you to
 "bewail your guilt before God. And though you
 "cannot atone for your temerity, nor follow your
 "Pamphlet into every corner where it has vomited
 "out slander, and taught to profane the Sabbath,
 "you will, I trust and pray, return to your first
 "principles, keep holy the Sabbath, and bring all
 "under your authority, not to engage in Writing,
 "Arithmetic, Hiring out books, or Book-keeping
 "on GOD'S HOLY DAY ; but to *worship the Lord*
 "*in the beauty of holiness*, in his own appointed way ;
 "and so not appear wiser than God, by setting up a
 "method of your own in opposition to his".

I should be esteemed very unpolite indeed, if I did not thank Mr. Whitaker for his pious prayers on my behalf ; but he cannot expect me to bewail my

guilt before God, till I am convinced of having incurred it. The best way to do this, will be by fair argument. Tho Mr. Whitaker is pleased to tell me "I am a very great sinner", nay, that "the number and magnitude of my sins it "is not easy to calculate", yet I must still say, that I am not conscious that my endeavours to teach the ignorant, and lead the youth to God, are among the number of my sins. As to having embraced these principles "hastily", Mr. Whitaker will give me leave to tell him, he is mistaken. My principles upon this subject, are founded upon the experience I have had for upwards of seven years in one of the largest schools in the kingdom. During this time, between three and four thousand children have been entered in the register-book, all of whom must have been regular scholars six months before they could be admitted to be registered. From my situation in the school, I have had a pretty good opportunity of observing the conduct of those who have been educated in it, and of forming a tolerably just estimate of the effects of what has been taught. Some of them are married; many of them are grown up; some of them are become regular teachers: others by the things proposed to their attention, and by the manner of treating them, have been retained in the school; so that we have at present about one hundred assistant teachers, who in rotation supply the places of the absent regular teachers, or assist where additional help is wanted. Some scores have died happy in the love of Jesus, and have left the clearest testimony in favour of the school.

And, blessed be God ! not a few, both of those who have left the school, and of those who are in it, are living in the fear of God, and walking in his commandments. It is a great happiness, that against every thing Mr. Whitaker, or his friends, can say of the evils of our teaching, we can oppose the experience of years, and the testimony of living witnesses.

And if the Sunday schools be of such general utility to the morals, and improvement of the minds of the rising generation, so that thousands of poor, ignorant, miserable, and helpless children are, by attending this blessed institution, instructed in their duty to themselves, their neighbour, and their God ; and if the good effects of these instructions appear in the goodness of their manners, the morality of their lives, and the happiness of their latter end, which is beyond all contradiction ; I would call upon all the inhabitants of this kingdom, to unite their hearts and abilities in promoting a charity, which embraces all that is sacred and dear to mankind—national prosperity, peace, unanimity and concord—honesty, industry, truth and sobriety—and above all, the salvation of the soul from ignorance, vice, and misery, into love to God, and good-will towards men. Can my countrymen engage in a charity superior to this ? Can they employ their talents to better purposes, than to relieve the bodies, and save the souls, of that neglected and almost friendless race—whose harmless looks, and forlorn appearances—whose ensnaring circumstances, and inexperienced years, plead for them ? Let gentlemen of independent fortunes step forward,

and persons of *low degree* lend their charitable hearts and assisting hands, in every city, town, and village in the kingdom. Was there ever a call like this? We are hastening toward the latter days—the time of the full completion of the prophecies, of universal righteousness, peace and good-will ;—let us if possible be co-workers together, with the providence of God, in hastening and bringing about that blessed period, when we shall no longer need to say to our neighbour, *Know the Lord ; but when all shall know him, from the least to the greatest.* Make a beginning in this blessed work—fear no obstacles—your cause is good—the Lord will prosper you ;—if you do not see it your duty to teach things which are taught in some schools, teach such as *you judge* will have the greatest tendency to make the children wise, holy, useful, and happy.—This is the time—let no difficulties hinder you—no names, sects, or parties—no hard speeches, nor difference of sentiment.—Engage in this, the noblest of charities, and *the Lord will bless you in your deed.*



COPY OF A LETTER

from

The Committee of the Thornset (now New-Mill)
SUNDAY SCHOOL.

13th August, 1798.

SIR;

As the Rev. Thomas Whitaker, in his pamphlet, has taken the liberty of speaking rather too freely respecting the Thornset school, we conceive ourselves called upon to refute charges, of so serious a nature. If you think of answering that publication, we shall be obliged by your inserting the following particulars respecting our school.

One part of Thornset hamlet is in Mellor chapelry, but where the village of Thornset is situated is in Hayfield chapelry; a small river at the foot of the village is the boundary or separation of the chapelries. But at the time you published your pamphlet, the school was removed from Thornset to that part of New-Mill which is in Mr. O's chapelry, on account of convenience. If you had said New-Mill instead of Thornset, it would have been right; but as it was removed only a short time before, we suppose you had not heard of the alteration.

Mr. Whitaker says, page 20, in his book, "Was the principal design of the Thornset school to save the souls of the children?" From the printed report of it, dated Jan. 1, 1797, one would not "imagine that children have any souls, or that there is either a God, or a future state. But it was likely to be so, when a man was at the head of the teachers, who at the time avowedly rejected the "Divine Authority of the Bible". The report alluded to, was the first we published; and as upwards of three-fourths of the scholars had been admitted the preceding year, we wished to give a brief and plain account of the state of the school, and of its obvious utility in the improvement of the children. Prayer and religious instruction in the school were attended to; and we hope the seed sown has already begun to spring up, and will be more and more manifested.

Upwards of six years have elapsed since the commencement of this school. During the first four years, the number of scholars seldom, if ever, exceeded eighty; and at that time, the school was governed by the teachers. In the beginning of the year 1796, several persons, having seen the prosperity of some neighbouring schools, engaged heartily in this, and it began immediately to increase, so that in January, 1797,

there were three hundred and fifty-eight scholars. A committee was established in 1796; who took upon them the government of the school; and visitors or superintendents were chosen, who were delegated by the committee to inspect the school, and to take the active management of it; and this plan has been pursued to the present time. There was not any individual at the head of the teachers. Mr. W. may bring what authority he pleases, to prove what he has said. The rules of the school, agreed to by upwards of twenty respectable persons, will be sufficient proof of the contrary. There was not therefore any person at the head of the teachers, nor any individual among them, that we know of, "who avowedly rejected the Divine Authority of the Bible". On the contrary, every thing in our power has been done, to stimulate religious characters to engage in the school; and none but persons of good character would be suffered to remain in it. It has been said that Mr. W. had made a mistake, and that the person meant was one of the committee, who has been mentioned by name in Mr. O.'s neighbourhood. However, the person named had no connexion with the teachers at that time; neither did he, we believe, at the time, avowedly reject the Divine Authority of the Bible. About three years ago, by reading the sophistical writings of a modern infidel, his mind was much hurt, and he was led to doubt the authenticity of the scriptures, and at that time frequently expressed his doubts to those whom he thought likely to give him information. But, before the time alluded to, he had freely and publicly declared his firm conviction of the truth of Christianity, and avowed that he was convinced of the authenticity of the scriptures, and that his doubts on that subject were entirely removed: and we may add, his conduct since that time is consistent with his profession.

Again: Public worship was attended, but Thornset being near two miles from the nearest church, the children could not be taken constantly; besides, agreeable accommodation could not be had, after application had been made for that purpose. The children have been conducted several times to Mellor church; and both Mr. O. and Mr. Whitaker can affirm, if they please, that they have had the opportunity of catechising and instructing them in the ways of religion. If the school was a "nursery of irreligion and infidelity", why did not those divines severely chastise the teachers, who were along with the children, for sowing such wicked and abominable seed? Mr. Whitaker adds, "The scholars at this school were dismissed early on a Sunday afternoon, and their rude behaviour and mischievous conduct in returning home, were the common complaint of the neighbourhood". The scholars were seldom, if ever, dismissed before half past four in the afternoon, except in winter. There was a visitors' letter-box belonging the school, which was regularly opened every Sunday morning when the visitors met, and every complaint was minutely investigated,

and the offenders duly corrected: but we met with very few instances indeed, of rude behaviour or mischievous conduct. If it was the common complaint of the neighbourhood, we are sorry we never heard of it before: and, as by far the greater part of the children belonged to Mr. O.'s chapelry, if he had acted the part of a minister, and sent his officers after these mischievous young people, in order to repress such rudeness, it might have rendered the public more service, than his friend ushering forth to the world such general evils as we were not at all aware of.

Tho the pen of the malevolent may continue to heap accusations upon us; it is to him who knows all our actions, that we must one day give an account. Poor fallible mortals may judge as they please; we know it was, and still is, our principal design to be the mean, through the blessing of God, of instructing poor ignorant children in the way of salvation; and that we may double our diligence, and have no other end in view, is the sincere desire of,

Your's, respectfully,

The COMMITTEE

for Thornset (now New-Mill) Sunday School.

John Crowder.

Joshua Gregory.

John Cresswell.

John Vickers.

Micah Mosley.

Daniel Stafford.

Philip Ashton.

Abram Whitticar.

James Crowder.

Anthony Crowder.

John Hill.

Randle Taylor.

John Holme.

John Rusby.

Benjamin Ollerenshaw.

Paul Mason.

William Woolley.

John Johnson.

Jarvis Wild.

James Wild.

To Mr. Joseph Mayer,
Stockport.



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